

PHOTOGRAPHIC INTERPRETATION REPORT



ROAD CONSTRUCTION
IN NORTHERN LAOS

NPIC/R-15/70
MARCH 1970

GROUP 1: EXCLUDED FROM
AUTOMATIC DOWNGRADING
AND DECLASSIFICATION

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ROAD CONSTRUCTION IN NORTHERN LAOS

INTRODUCTION

This report depicts the status of enemy road construction projects in northern Laos (Figure 1). It traces the development of Route 412 from China into Laos during the 1968-1969 dry season and describes another border crossing built during the current dry season. The report also contains information on other new road segments, bridges, and telecommunications.

BASIC DESCRIPTION

Roads 25X1D

During the 1968-1969 dry season the Chinese Communists began a major road building effort into northern Laos. One road, a projection of China Route 412, was built south across the Laotian/Chinese border to Ban Botene, then southeast to Muong Sai following the alignment of Laos Routes 4 and 45, to Muong La. This road, 67 nautical miles (nm) long, was built at a rate of nearly 1 mile per day.

While building the road, the Chinese constructed many support facilities. By late [REDACTED] at least 57 facilities containing more than 1,100 buildings had been identified on the Ban Botene - Muong Sai segment alone.

With the advent of the 1969-1970 dry season the Chinese new road construction effort was directed southwest from Muong Sai along the Nam Ngao and Nam Beng (stream) valleys. This 44.8-nm road was also built at a rate of approximately 1 mile per day, and now extends to its present visible terminus at a point 2 nm northeast of Muong Houn. The road is serviceable to construction vehicles; however, cargo trucks could also use it if necessary.

Shortly after construction began southward from Muong Sai, work along Route 45 northeast of Muong La resumed but has progressed more slowly because the rugged terrain must be blasted. Intermittent construction is observed along the west bank of the Nam Phak (stream) to its terminus 13.2 nm north of Muong La. A major concrete bridge is being built at Muong La (Figure 2). Construction will probably follow the stream to its confluence with the Nam Ou (river) and join Route 19 at Muong Khoua.

25X1D

In late [REDACTED] at least 23 nm of survey trace and intermittent trail widening extended north along the east bank of the Nam Ou (river) from the western terminus of Route 19 at Muong Khoua. Subsequent coverage of the area shows no continuation of this activity. Should such a road be constructed, it could provide a link between China and North Vietnam via Routes 49, 4, and 19.

In northwestern Laos, a segment of new road construction has been observed as an extension of China Route 4026. The new road crosses the border into Laos and extends 2 nm south to an unnamed village where the road forks. One leg continues 2.2 nm south, the other 3.7 nm southwest. Both legs are motorable and terminate at probable construction camps.

25X1D

In the eastern portion of northern Laos, three short segments of new road were identified on [REDACTED] photography. A 0.8-nm approach road for an alternate Route 6 river crossing is under construction on the east bank of the Song Ma (river). Further south, 3.7 nm of intermittent road construction is on the east bank of the Song Ma opposite Route 6. A third segment extends 8.5 nm northwest from North Vietnam along the north bank of the Nam Phua (stream). At the Laos/North Vietnam border it joins an unnumbered road. Only the westernmost 5-nm portion appears to be of recent construction.

Bridges

There are only four major bridges in the Communist-controlled sectors of northern Laos. These are the two bridges on Route 412 south of Ban Syda, the Muong Sai bridge, and the Muong La Bridge which is currently under construction. The remaining river and stream crossings consist of ferries, fords, and culverts.

Telecommunications

There are no photographically confirmed open-wire telecommunications lines or traces in the Communist-controlled areas of northern Laos. Several lines have been reported and others have been observed in the neighboring areas of China and North Vietnam.

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NO FOREIGN DISSEM

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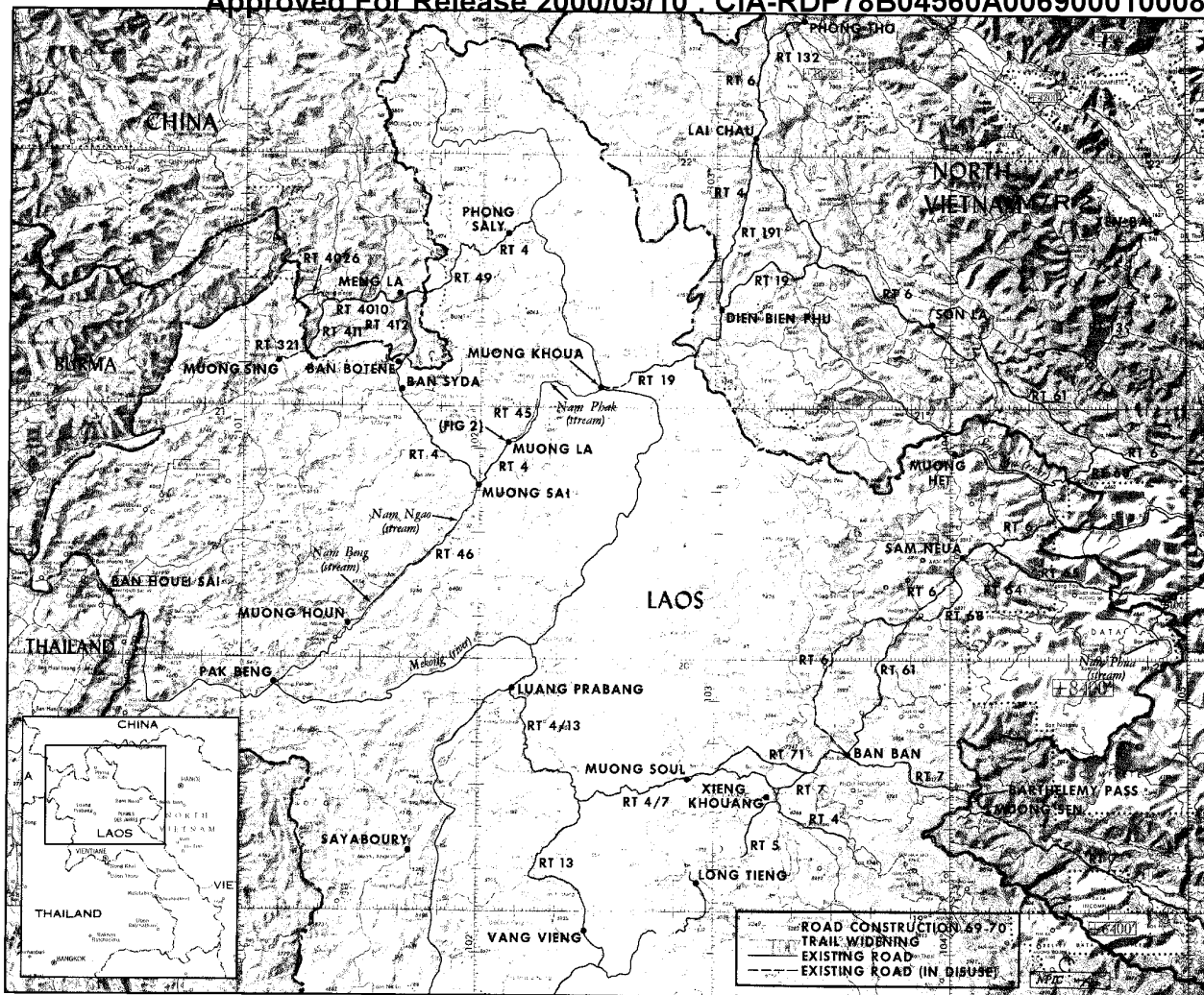
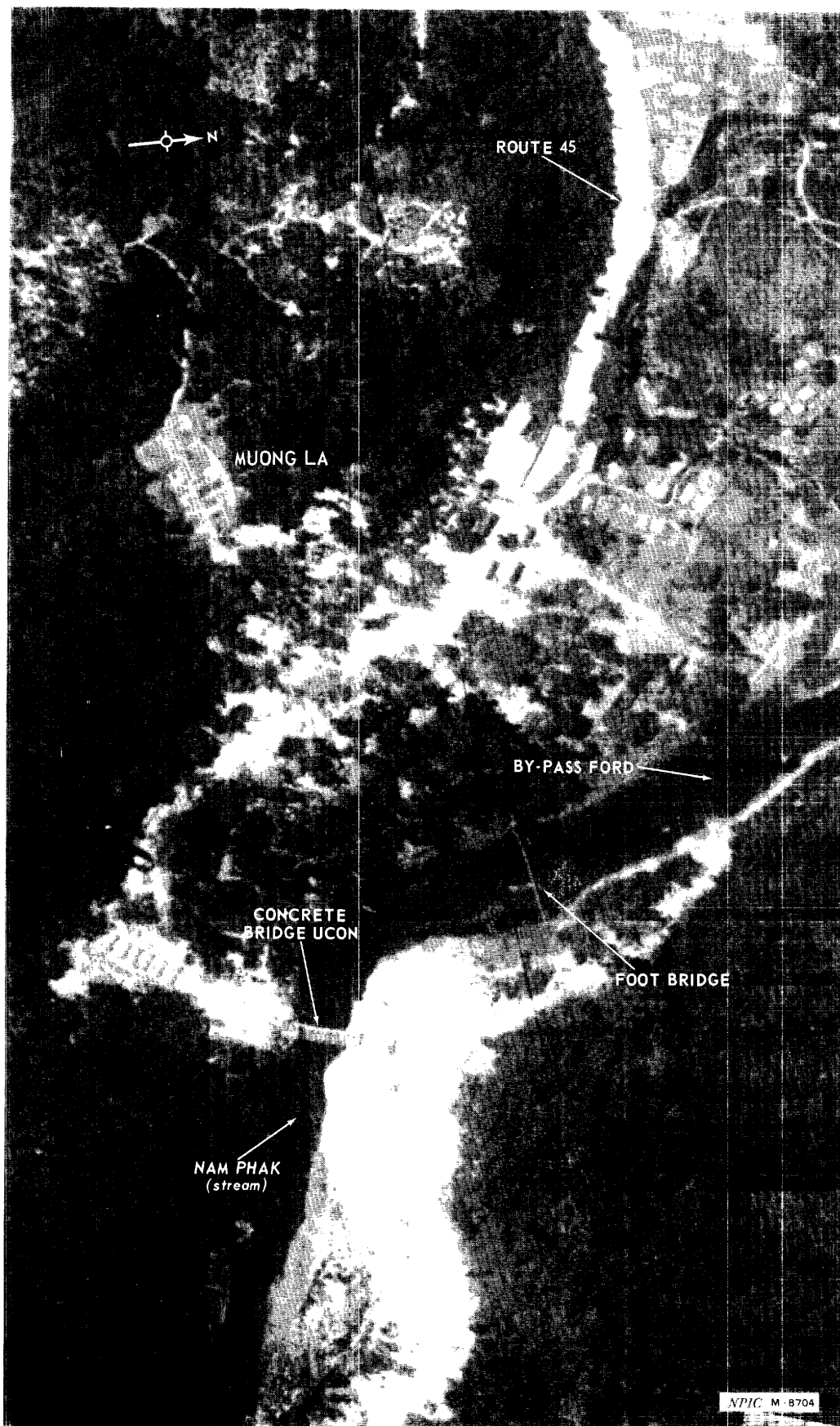


FIGURE 1. GENERAL LOCATION MAP

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25X1D

FIGURE 2. CONCRETE BRIDGE UNDER CONSTRUCTION NEAR MUONG LA, LAOS

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REFERENCES

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IMAGERY

This report is based on all reconnaissance photography available during the reporting period of [REDACTED]

MAPS or CHARTS

USAF. ONC, Sheet J-10, 6th ed, Mar 68, scale 1:1,000,000 (UNCLASSIFIED)

USAF. ONC, Sheet J-11, 7th ed, Oct 68, scale 1:1,000,000 (UNCLASSIFIED)

RELATED DOCUMENTS

25X1C

NPIC. R-141/68 Chinese Road Construction in Northern Laos, Jan 69
(CONFIDENTIAL/No Foreign Dissem [REDACTED])

NPIC. R-32/69 Chinese Road Construction Camps in Northern Laos,
Apr 69 (SECRET/No Foreign Dissem)

25X1C

NPIC. R-99/69 Increased Chinese Support Facilities, Routes 412
and 4, Northern Laos, Nov 69 (CONFIDENTIAL/No Foreign Dissem
[REDACTED])

REQUIREMENT

NPIC Project 250623

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